

# The Relationship of Cohesion and Coherence: A Contrastive Study of English and Chinese

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## Abstract

The relationship of cohesion and coherence has always been a central issue in the study of discourse processing. In order to achieve a more thorough understanding of the relationship, this article tackles the issue from a contrastive linguistic point of view. Halliday and Hasan (1976), Widdowson (1978), Carrell (1982), Brown and Yule (1983) are reviewed to identify their claims about cohesion and coherence. Several Chinese texts are then analysed with a focus on the use of reference and conjunctive relations. The analysis shows that cohesion, as surface linguistic features, can not account fully for the coherence of a text. Rather, underlying semantic relations as well as readers' perceptions of the text should be taken into consideration to construct a complete picture of discourse processing.

**Key Words:** discourse analysis, cohesion, coherence, reference, Chinese-English contrastive study

## 1 Introduction

- (1) Hot Lava java. A blast of pure caffeine.  
(taken from a coffee advertisement in a supermarket magazine)

As a reader, we assume that what we read is a text, that is, that it forms a coherent whole. What is there in this text that convinces the reader of its coherence? Does this sense of "hanging together" come from cohesive ties of various functions, such as reference, ellipsis, and conjunction, if there are any? Or does it merely come from the adjacency of the two phrases? Or does it come from the reader's ability to match the text with his/her schema of coffee tasting?

Text processing has always occupied a prominent place in discourse research. On the one hand, researchers are interested in the mechanisms of textual cohesion; on the other hand, they propose hypotheses to explain the assumptions of coherence in the mind of the reader. In

this article, various claims will be reviewed to examine the relationship between cohesion and coherence. In addition, the universality of this relationship will be considered from the point of view of contrastive linguistics.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Halliday and Hasan (1976)

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), a text is "a unit of language in use" (p.1). What distinguishes a text from a non-text is its "texture." The texture is provided by the cohesive relations that exist between certain linguistic features that are *present* in the passage and can be identified as contributing to its total unity (p.2). In other words, the texture of a text is formed by the cohesive ties that it contains. For example,

(2) Wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fireproof dish.

In the second sentence, "them" refers back to the "six cooking apples" in the previous sentence, thus linking the two sentences into a cohesive text. This relationship of reference is one of five cohesive devices identified by Halliday and Hasan, namely, reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunction and lexical cohesion. In this study, our analysis will focus on reference and conjunction.

### 2.2 Widdowson (1978)

Widdowson (1978) advances the idea that a text can be coherent without "overt, linguistically-signalled" cohesion. When we utter a sentence in a normal communicative activity, according to Widdowson (1978), we are expressing a proposition and, at the same time, performing some kind of illocutionary act in expressing the proposition. Sentences used communicatively in discourse can take on value when they are in relation to other propositions expressed in other sentences. When we recognize this relationship, we recognize this sequence of sentences as constituting cohesive discourse (p.26). However, when expressing propositions in discourse, we are also performing illocutionary acts. Where a text does not have overt linguistic cohesive links, as a reader we will make sense of it by "infer[ring] the covert propositional connections from an interpretation of the illocutionary

acts" (p.29). This is why we often find discourse coherent when it does not appear cohesive. Widdowson (1978, p.29) uses a piece of dialogue to illustrate his idea:

- (3) A: That's the telephone.  
B: I'm in the bath.  
A: O.K.

How do readers recognize this dialogue as coherent in spite of the fact that it contains no cohesive ties at all? When considered in isolation, the three utterances can not take on any particular communicative value. Taken together, however, they can be recognized as parts of an exchange. Thus, we interpret A's remark about the telephone as a request and B's response as an excuse for not being able to comply with A's request. A's second remark is then understood as an acceptance of B's excuse. By recognizing the illocutionary acts performed by these sentences, we can supply the missing propositions and interpret the text as coherent.

### 2.3 Carrell (1982)

Carrell (1982) challenges Halliday and Hasan's concept of cohesion as the basis of coherence in the light of schema-theoretical views of text processing. Schema theory emphasises the "interactive process between the text and the prior background knowledge or memory schemata of the listener or reader" (p.482). The insufficiency of Halliday and Hasan's concept of cohesion, according to Carrell (1982), lies in their failure to take the contributions of the reader into account. In the process of comprehension, the reader does not rely solely on the surface linguistic features of the text. Rather, the schemata, or the world knowledge, that the reader brings to the text play a more important part. Carrell quotes Morgan and Sellner (1980) as arguing that cohesion of surface linguistic features is not the cause, but the effect, of coherence. The following text is given as an example:

- (4) The picnic was ruined. No one remembered to bring a corkscrew.

The coherence of this mini-text does not reside in the linguistic lexical cohesive tie between "picnic" and "corkscrew." Rather, our recognition of the string of sentences as a coherent text is based on the fact that we can "access a familiar schema . . . in which picnics and corkscrews go together" (Carrell, 1982, p.484). In other words, the lexical cohesion could be the effect, instead of the cause, of the text's coherence.

## 2.4 Brown and Yule (1983)

Brown and Yule (1983) are also doubtful about Halliday and Hasan's idea of cohesion and raise two critical questions (pp.194-5):

1. Is Halliday and Hasan's cohesion necessary to the identification of a text?
2. Is such cohesion sufficient to guarantee identification as a text?

They contend that a reader will automatically assume "semantic relations" when encountering a text and interpret sentences in the light of the previous ones. Therefore, texture, in the sense of "explicit realisation of semantic relations," is not critical to the identification of texts. They conducted a small experiment by scrambling the sentences in the following text while retaining the formal cohesion (p.197).

- (5) [1] A man in white clothes, who could only be the surviving half-breed, was running as one does run when Death is the pace-maker. [2] The white figure lay motionless in the middle of the great plain. [3] Behind him, only a few yards in his rear, bounded the high ebony figure of Zambo, our devoted negro. [4] An instant afterwards Zambo rose, looked at the prostrate man, and then, waving his hand joyously to us, came running in our direction. [5] They rolled on the ground together. [6] Even as we looked, he sprang upon the back of the fugitive and flung his arms round his neck.

(reorganised in the order 1, 3, 6, 5, 4, 2, this passage is taken from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*, 1912)

The experiment was to show that it would not be easy for the reader to interpret such a "collection of sentences," even with the presence of all the cohesive relationships. They show that cohesion alone is never sufficient for the identification of a text. Moreover, similar to Carrell (1982), Brown and Yule hold that the source of cohesion is to be found outside the text, instead of in the words-on-the-page (1983, p.198).

If we juxtapose Halliday and Hasan's view of cohesion with Widdowson's, Carrell's, or Brown and Yule's refutations, we will find that they all agree that semantic relations do exist in a text and help constitute its coherence. The biggest difference lies in "explicitness." While Halliday and Hasan emphasise the explicit expressions of semantic relations, the others advocate "the underlying semantic relation . . . that actually has the cohesive power," a concept Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.229) bring up in their discussion, but leave behind when

constructing their taxonomy of conjunctive expressions.

The relationship between coherence and cohesion might be examined from another facet, namely, its universality. In their translation studies, Hatim and Mason (1990) have argued that the sequence of coherence relations, such as cause-effect, problem-solution, etc., should remain constant in translation from the source text to the target text, but the ways in which this underlying coherence is reflected on the surface of text, the cohesion, are more likely to be language-specific or text-specific (p.195). In this article, therefore, we choose to compare Chinese with English to investigate further this controversy, in the hope of achieving a more thorough understanding of the relationship of cohesion and coherence.

### 3 The characteristics of the Chinese language

Chinese is a pragmatically-oriented language, as opposed to grammatically-oriented languages such as English. Most Chinese words do not have grammatical inflections. Therefore, the language relies heavily for its interpretation on its speakers'/listeners' knowledge of the real world (Yip & Rimmington, 1997, p.93). Another way of distinguishing who did what to whom is by word order (Li & Thompson, 1987). An example is the topic-comment construction, which is argued to be the basic structure in Chinese discourse. According to Li and Thompson (1981), a topic should satisfy the following conditions: semantically it sets "a framework in naming what the sentence is about" and it must be either definite or generic; syntactically, it occurs in sentence-initial position and it can be separated from the rest of the sentence by a pause or a pause particle (Li & Thompson, 1981, p.86).

A typical topic-comment sentence may look like this:

- (6) *shu*      *wo* *kan*      *guo*      *le*  
book    I    read    EXP    CRS  
"I have read the book."

The subject of this sentence is "wo" (I), who does the reading, while the topic, "shu" (book), placed in sentence-initial position, announces the theme of the discourse.

A phenomenon related to this topic-comment constructions is the topic chain, "where a referent is referred to in the first clause, and then there follow several more clauses talking

about the same referent but not overtly mentioning that referent" (Li & Thompson, 1981, p.659). In other words, once the topic is established at the beginning of a sentence<sup>1</sup>, it can be omitted from the rest of the clauses, because it is understood that they are about the same topic. This principle of omission forms a direct contrast with the reference system in English. In English, a noun at the beginning of a text, such as "John," might be followed by a number of occurrences of "he," "him" or "his," all of which refer to the original "John." This "network of lines of reference, each occurrence being linked to all its predecessors up to and including the initial reference" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p.52), constitutes the internal cohesion of a text.

#### 4 Text analysis – reference

Now we will look at a short paragraph of classical Chinese written in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Both the Chinese text and the parallel English translation text are taken from the bilingual edition of a book on ancient Chinese customs. In classical Chinese, words are used selectively and sparingly. Superfluous words are omitted when their omission does not hamper comprehension.

- (7) 1 *cha*                *bu yiben*,  
       tea (bush)    not transplant,  
       2 *zhi*        *bi*        *sheng zi*.  
       plant    sure    produce seed.  
       3 *guren*                *jiehun*,  
       ancient people    marry,  
       4 *bi yi cha wei li*,  
       sure use tea as gift,  
       5 *qu*        *qi bu yizhi zhi yi ye*.  
       use        3sg not convert GEN    meaning AUX.

"Tea bushes cannot be transplanted, but once planted they are sure to produce seeds. In olden days, therefore, when people got married, they would be sent tea as a betrothal gift, in reference to the plant's steadfastness."

This paragraph illustrates the way the "topic chain" functions in Chinese. The text consists of

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<sup>1</sup> Here we follow the conventions of western traditional grammar and define a sentence as a unit of language with a full stop as the boundary. The concept of "sentence," however, can vary from language to language. A sentence in Chinese usually contains a central proposition, followed by several associated clauses, all of which related to the same topic.

two sentences. In the first sentence, the topic "cha" (tea), which occurs in sentence-initial position, is not overtly mentioned in the following clause, which is talking about the same referent as the first clause. Then, a new topic, "guren" (ancient people), is introduced and signified at the very beginning of the second sentence, where the three actions, "jiehun" (marry), "yi" (use) and "qu" (use), are connected in a chain and understood to be about the same topic.

In the parallel English translation text, however, the pronouns "they" have to be used, first referring to "tea bushes" in the first sentence and secondly to "people" in the second sentence. This supports the point mentioned above that the cohesion of a text in English is constituted by reference items, such as "he" or "they," while the cohesion in Chinese might be realized by the existence of a topic chain. In other words, the absence of reference items in Chinese does not usually impair the underlying coherence.

Though omission does not obstruct comprehension in the above case, it might, in other cases, generate different interpretations with its obscurity. A well-known Chinese nursery rhyme is given as an example. The English translation text is provided by the researcher.

- (8) *sanlunche, pao de kuai,*  
 tricycle, run CSC fast,  
*shangmian zuo ge lao taitai*  
 thereon sit CL old lady  
*yao wu mao, gei yi kuai,*  
 beg five dime give one dollar,  
*ni suo qiguai bu qiguai?*  
 you say strange no strange?

"A rickshaw was running very fast, on which there sat an old lady. I asked her for five dimes, and she gave me one dollar. Say, wasn't this strange?"

The language in this nursery rhyme is modern. Notice that it consists of two symmetrical parts. In other words, the two parts are in the same length. "Yao wu mao" and "gei yi kuai" in the third line, each with three characters, are in symmetry with the three-character phrases "sanlunche" and "pao de kuai" in the first part. In the second part, no subject is attached to either "yao wu mao" or "gei yi kuai." This would not strike the Chinese as anomalous in the first place, given the prevalence of zero-pronoun use in the language. Nevertheless, when analysed, the rhyme may yield different interpretations. Who asks for the fifty cents and who

gives instead the one dollar? World knowledge tells us that it can not be the rickshaw that either asks or gives the money. Consensus might be achieved as to the person who gives the money, namely the old lady. However, we are not sure how many other people are involved. Besides the presence of the driver of the rickshaw, the narrator and other onlookers might be in the scene as well. Notice that "yao" can denote either the driver demanding for the fare for the rickshaw ride or onlookers begging for some spare change. In addition to the diverse meanings arising from the verb "yao," there is another problem point. The scope of the topic "sanlunche" extends through the first part of the rhyme. However, in the second part, when the readers/listeners are expecting a new topic, they are not provided a clue as to what it might be. This example shows that even in Chinese, a relatively flexible language as compared to English, omission of topics will occasionally cause problems.

Yet, when the author made an informal investigation on Chinese native speakers' comprehension of the rhyme, it was found out that they did not have any difficulty in reconstructing the story in the rhyme or supplying the missing agents for the two actions, "yao wu mao" and "gei yi kuai." What is revealing is that the readers/listeners have a schema related to riding in a rickshaw. They can, thus, invoke a mental picture and match it with the rhyme, filling in the gaps accordingly. This discovery leads one to suspect that schemata play an equally significant role in the comprehension of texts as cohesive devices such as reference.

When translating this apparently simple nursery rhyme into English, we are obliged to supply subjects in various parts of the story to cater for the structure of the English language. Faced with several interpretations, a translator has to make a decision. No matter what decision is made, the room for interpretation will be diminished.

In spite of the lack of cohesive ties, the rhyme can, nevertheless, be reconstructed without much difficulty. When reading, readers in general do not aim to recover all the possible interpretations. On the contrary, they are satisfied with THE interpretation that fits both with the text and with their mental image of the world. In other words, readers, on the one hand, base their comprehension on the text, and on the other hand, they supply the gap in the textual world with the knowledge derived from their experiential world.

Now we will turn to a narrative to see how personal reference items function in another



English text and its parallel Chinese text. The story "The ass, the fox and the lion" is taken from *Aesop's Fables*, and the Chinese text is a translation version with a few modifications on the researcher's part.

- (9) L1 *luzi han huli jie meng hu bao, dao*  
 ass and fox form partnership mutual protect, go  
 L2 *lin zhong zhao shiwu. zou mei duo yuan,*  
 forest in look for food. walk not much far,  
 L3 *yujian yi zhi shizi. huli yan jian weiji dangqian, bian*  
 meet a CL lion. fox eye see crisis in front, then  
 L4 *zou dao shizi mianqian, daying ti ta xiangfa*  
 walk to lion front, promise for 3sg contrive  
 L5 *zhuozhu luzi, zhiyao shizi ken bu shanghai ziji.*  
 capture ass, so long as lion agree not hurt self.  
 L6 *huli xiang luzi baozheng anquan hou, bian*  
 fox to ass assure safety after, then  
 L7 *yin ta wang yi ge shen keng qu, shi ta*  
 lead 3sg toward a CL deep pit go, make 3sg  
 L8 *luo xia xianjing. shizi jian luzi yijing wen*  
 fall down trap. lion see ass already sure  
 L9 *daoshou le, like xian zhuozhu huli, zai*  
 in hand PFV, immediately first capture fox, then  
 L10 *qu pu sha luzi.*  
 go attack kill ass.

L1 "The Ass and the Fox, having entered into partnership together for their  
 L2 mutual protection, went out into the forest to hunt. They had not proceeded  
 L3 far when they met a Lion. The Fox, seeing imminent danger, approached the  
 L4 Lion and promised to contrive for him the capture of the Ass if the Lion  
 L5 would pledge his word not to harm the Fox. Then, upon assuring the Ass  
 L6 that he would not be injured, the Fox led him to a deep pit and arranged that  
 L7 he should fall into it. The Lion, seeing that the Ass was secured,  
 L8 immediately clutched the Fox, and attacked the Ass at his leisure."

This story line is more complex than the previous examples. It needs more careful handling of personal pronouns in order to convey correct information. In the English text, there are in total ten instances of personal pronouns, including four subjects, three objects and three possessives, while the parallel Chinese text uses far fewer pronouns (one subject and two objects). For the ease of comparison, the pronouns in the English text and their referents in the bilingual texts are displayed in

Table 1.

Table 1: The Occurrences of Pronouns and Their Referents in the English Text and the Chinese Text

Pronouns in the English text	Referents in the English text	Correspondences in the Chinese text
their (L1)	The Ass and the Fox	N/A
they (L2)	The Ass and the Fox	N/A
they (L3)	The Ass and the Fox	N/A
him (L4)	the Lion	"ta" (L4)
his (L5)	the Lion	N/A
he (L5)	The Ass	N/A
him (L6)	The Ass	"ta" (L7)
he (L7)	The Ass	"ta" (L7)
it (L6)	the pit	"xianjing" (L8)
his (L8)	the Lion	N/A

We have discussed pronouns serving as topic-subjects in the previous sections. In this section, we will concentrate on possessive pronouns and the third person impersonal pronoun. Notice that all the instances of possessive pronouns in the English text are omitted in the Chinese translation text, which is a common feature of the language. For example, the third person possessive pronouns in the following sentence can be omitted without any loss of clarity. In fact, they *must* be omitted in order to produce acceptable expressions.

- (10) *ta shua le ya, xi le lian*  
 3sg brush PFV tooth, wash PFV face  
 "He brushed his teeth and washed his face."

Another point worth mentioning is the reference item "it." In the English text, the anaphoric "it" refers to the deep pit that the Ass falls into. In the Chinese text, instead of the third person impersonal "ta," another term "xianjing" is used. In Chinese, pronouns refer primarily to persons, though possibly under the influence of English, "ta" may sometimes be used to refer to inanimate objects. However, this usage is generally regarded as un-Chinese, especially in the written texts. When the Chinese need to make reference to inanimate objects, they will have to resort to various strategies. The following are the strategies proposed by Tsao (1983, p.100) with examples contrived by the researcher.

- a) If the reference occurs in the topic/subject position, lexical repetition is used.

- (11) *wo xihuan zhe ge beizi, zhe ge beizi hen piaoliang.*

I like this CL cup, this CL cup very beautiful.  
"I like this cup. It is beautiful."

b) If it occurs in other positions, a zero-pronoun is used.

(12) *zhe ge beizi hen piaoliang, wo xihuan*  
this CL cup very beautiful, I like  
"The cup is beautiful. I like it."

In example 9, the reference term "it" is put in the position of a prepositional object, and may be omitted in the Chinese translation, as suggested in the second strategy above. Therefore, it is possible to translate the clause "arranged that he should fall into it" into

(13) *shi ta luo xia qu*  
make 3sg fall down go

Notice that the above two strategies are not indisputable rules. Here the translator chose to represent "it" with "xianjing" (trap), a superordinate word of "keng" (pit), instead of applying a zero-pronoun. The choice of the term might be deliberate so as to reinforce the meanness of the Fox. Reiteration is one type of lexical cohesion. A reiterated item, as Halliday and Hasan (1976) point out, may be "a repetition, a synonym or near-synonym, a superordinate, or a general word" (p.278). Moreover, as Tsao (1983) rightly points out, in order to avoid inanimate "ta" (it), Chinese speakers tend to use more reiteration strategies in contexts where pronouns might be preferred in English.

From the above analysis, it was found that English and Chinese have a different though similar network of reference items functioning as cohesive devices. This result justifies Hatim and Mason's claim (1990) that there are few one-to-one correspondences between the cohesive ties of target language and source language.

## 5 Text analysis -- conjunction

Now we shall look at another of Halliday and Hasan's cohesive devices -- conjunction. Conjunctive elements are not "devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) text" like reference, ellipsis or substitution. Rather they are cohesive "by virtue of their specific meanings" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p.226).

In Li and Thompson's grammar book of Mandarin Chinese (1981), the function of conjunction is called "sentence linking." There are essentially two kinds of linking: forward-linking and backward-linking. The positions of the linking elements in Chinese can be unpredictable. For example, some of them can occur in clause-final position, such as "yihou" (after) and "dehua" (if):

(14) *wo xia ban yihou, jiu qu guangjie.*  
I descend work after, then go shopping.  
"After I got off work, I went shopping."

(15) *ni bu qu dehua, jiu hui you mafan*  
you not go if, then sure have trouble  
"If you don't go, you will get into trouble."

Some can be positioned both after the topic/subject and in clause-initial position, such as "ruguo" (if):

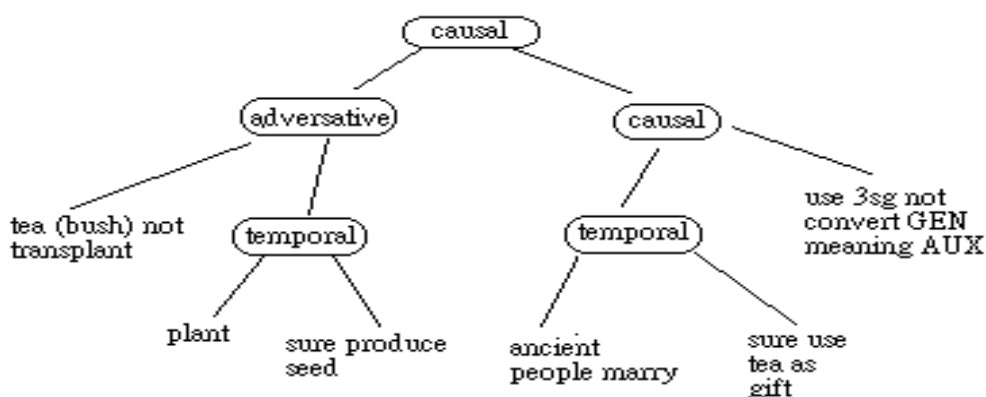
(16) *wo ruguo zhidao, jiu hui gaosu ni.*  
I if know, then sure tell you.  
"If I knew, I would tell you."

In addition to these explicit linking elements, implicit ones are also common in the language. When the relationship between two clauses is not signalled explicitly, the reader/listener must make inference from his/her knowledge of the situation and the context (Li & Thompson 1981, p.641).

The absence of explicit markers of cohesion is striking in classical Chinese texts. The "cha" paragraph analysed above can serve as a good example here. Not a single explicit conjunctive word can be detected on the surface of the paragraph. Yet, when analysed, the text presents a complex network of conjunction. Three levels of conjunctive relations can be found to be embedded in the paragraph. On the highest level, a causal relation exists between the first and the second sentences, explaining why there was the custom of giving tea as a wedding gift. Then, in the first sentence, an adversative relation juxtaposes the non-transplantation of tea bushes with their productive nature, while in the second sentence, the reason why tea was given as a wedding gift is spelt out in the causal relation between clauses 3-4 and clause 5. Moreover, embedded in the second clause as well as between the third and the fourth clauses, there are two instances of temporal conjunctive relation. In contrast, most of the implicit

linking elements discussed above are rendered explicit in the English translation, namely, "but," "once," "therefore" and "when". The clausal relations of the "cha" text are laid out in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Clausal Relations in "Cha" Text



From the analysis above, it is found that Halliday and Hasan's model does not serve well in explaining text organization, in the sense that explicit markers of conjunction are hardly sufficient to bring out the underlying meaning relations of texts. Therefore, we will turn to Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) to better examine the relations among text parts.

One of RST's functions is "to describe the relations among clauses in a text" by "relating the meanings of conjunctions, the grammar of clause combining, and non-signalled parataxis" (Mann & Thompson, 1988, p.244). In this article, our main concern lies in relations that hold between two non-overlapping text spans. A few examples of relations are circumstance, solutionhood, enablement, condition and background. A sample of definition will be presented below, while the rest can be consulted in Mann and Thompson 1986 and 1988.

#### Circumstance

A circumstance relationship holds between two parts of a text if one of the parts establishes a circumstance or situation, and the other part is interpreted within or relative to that circumstance or situation.

One of the examples given by Mann and Thompson (1986, p.65) is

He walked slowly toward the bus station. He was thinking about the fight he'd had with Ken earlier that morning.

In this example, the first sentence establishes the situation, while the second sentence should be interpreted within the situation.

The advantage of this relational analysis is that it can account for text connectedness, coherence, and text function. As Mann and Thompson (1986) argue, conjunctions themselves are only "occasional surface hints" of a conjunctive network (p.88). By such a comprehensive analysis, we can lay bare this network in order to investigate the relationship between cohesion and coherence.

Now we will apply RST to the analysis of another Chinese text. It is the first paragraph of a newspaper comment, entitled "The Academic War Between the Internet and the Library". The English translation text is provided by the researcher. The original text has been divided roughly into clause-length units, following Mann and Thompson's method of analysis. For the principles of division, see Mann and Thompson (1988).

- (17) 1 *wanglu de puji,*  
Internet ASSOC disseminate,
- 2 *shi xuduo ren duiyu tushuguan de cunzai you*  
make many person about library ASSOC existence you  
*ruogan de huaiyi.*  
exist some NOM doubt.
- 3 *you ren renwei, zhiyao dakai diannaoliangshang*  
exist person think, so long as switch computer connect  
*wanglu,*  
Internet,
- 4 *jiu keyi qingyi-de zhaodao suoxu de zhiliao;*  
then can easily find need NOM information;
- 5 *ye you ren zhiyi, tushuguan weishemo hai yao*  
also exist person question, library why still want  
*huafei namo duo de yushuan*  
spend so much NOM budget
- 6 *qu caigou tushu ji qikan,*  
to purchase book and journal,
- 7 *wanglu-shang bushi you xuduo mianfei de*  
Internet-on not exist much free NOM  
*zhiliao ma?*  
information Q?
- 8 *suoyi, tushuguan mei you biyao zhongshi shouchang,*  
so, library not exist need value collect,

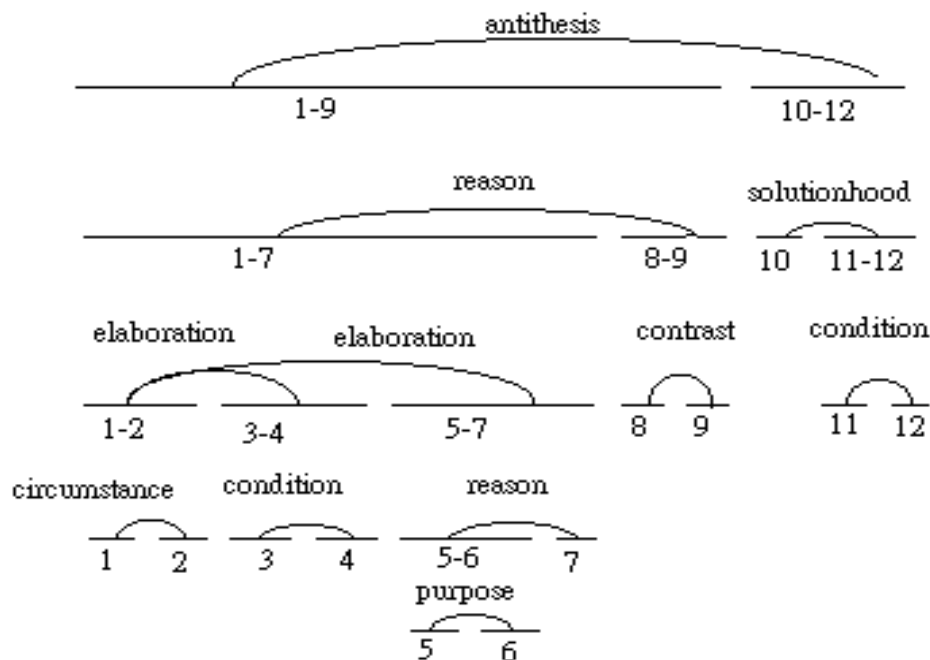
- 9 *bangzhu duzhe zai wanglu-shang qude zhiliao cai*  
 help reader at Internet-on obtain information only  
*shi zui zhongao de.*  
 be most important NOM.
- 10 *zhe xie kanfa qishi bingbu zhengque,*  
 this PL opinion in fact not at all correct,
- 11 *ruguo women liaojie dianzi zhiyuan de*  
 if we understand electronic resource ASSOC  
*texing,*  
 characteristic,
- 12 *kongpa jiu bu hui you shangshu de yi*  
 perhaps then not likely exist above mention NOM one  
*xie wujie.*  
 PL misunderstanding.

"Many people question the existence of libraries after the dissemination of the Internet. People think that we can easily find whatever information we need, so long as we switch on the computer and connect the Internet. Some people raise questions as to why libraries spend so much money on books and journals when free information is available on the net. Therefore, collection should not be the priority of libraries. What is more important is to help readers obtain information on the Internet. In fact, these opinions are incorrect. If we understand the characteristics of electronic resources, perhaps we won't have such misunderstandings."

This text is constructed on a thesis-antithesis relation, with units 1 through 9 as the thesis and units 10 through 12 the anti-thesis. That is, a current doubt of the value of libraries is first presented and an oppositional view is offered subsequently. In the thesis part, the doubt in units 1 through 7 provides reasons for the assertions in units 8 through 9. In the next finer level of analysis, the doubt is further elaborated in units 3-4 and 5-7. A conditional relation connects units 3 and 4, which is signalled by "zhiyao" (so long as) and "jiu" (then). Units 5 through 7 are two rhetorical questions, through which it is asserted that there is no need to spend money on books and journals because free information is available on the Internet. Unit 7 is thus provided as the reason for the assertion in units 5-6. The purpose relation between units 5 and 6 is signalled by the use of "qu" (to).

The latter part of the paragraph, units 10 through 12, is the antithesis part, as well as the idea that the writer identifies with. In unit 10, the writer refutes the general view as a mistake; at the same time, he posits the mistake as a problem and offers a solution in units 11-12. The sets of signals, "ruguo" (if) and "jiu" (then), point out the conditional relation between clauses 11 and 12. The whole analysis appears in Figure 2 with all the details.

Figure 2: RST Diagram for "The Academic War" Text



In addition to the three signals between 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 11 and 12, there are two more explicit expressions of conjunction: one is "suoyi" (so), marking the reason relation between units 1-7 and 8-9; the other is "cai" (only), showing the contrast between units 8 and 9. In other words, out of eleven relations found in our analysis, only five are explicitly marked. This shows that conjunctive relations as laid out in Halliday and Hasan's model are definitely insufficient to account for the "texture" of a text.

## 6 Conclusion

From our analysis of Chinese texts, two conclusions can be drawn. First, different languages might have different systems of cohesive devices. Devices in Halliday and Hasan's model (1976), such as reference, lexical cohesion, and conjunction, may be present in most languages. However, the importance attached to various types of cohesive devices might be different. Some of them might be avoided in a particular language, while the others are preferred. In our comparison of Chinese and English, for example, the third person impersonal pronoun is generally avoided and another cohesive device, lexical repetition, is, in compensation, adopted.

Secondly, it is safe to assume that a text's coherence is universal in the sense that the



underlying semantic relations can be grasped by the reader/speaker with the knowledge of language as well as from other resources, be it the application of schemata or the interpretation of illocutionary acts. In other words, the cohesion need not surface in the text in order to contribute to its coherence.

Though our study refutes Halliday and Hasan's claim that cohesive ties are "the ONLY source of texture" (1976, p.9), we do not intend to discard their efforts altogether. It can be seen from our study that surface linguistic features can not account fully for the complex nature of text processing. Nevertheless, they are often good indicators for readers to follow the flow of the theme as well as the meaning of the text. In the light of language teaching, these two opposing views do not have to exclude each other (Fulcher, 1993). Raising awareness of cohesive markers can certainly help guide an inexperienced reader to find his/her way to the writer's intentions.

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